## 3.4 OTHER PROJECTS/POTENTIAL INFLUENCES

### 3.4.1 US 8, Cameron to US 51

#### 3.4.1.1 Description of the Project

The US 8 Corridor Study from the Village of Cameron to US 51, conducted in 2001, evaluated the 107-mile (172 km) segment from the Village of Cameron in Barron County to US 51 in Lincoln County. This segment of US 8 is mainly a rural, two-lane highway that passes through Barron, Rusk, Price, Oneida, and Lincoln Counties.

The goals of this study were to identify the needs of the US 8 corridor, and based on these needs, develop concepts and strategies that both state and local agencies could implement to enhance the safety and efficiency of US 8. The scope of the study did not include engineering of alternatives. The concepts and strategies included in the report are ideas that, if implemented in the future, should improve the corridor's operation and level of safety.

#### 3.4.1.2 Description of Area of Effect

The five counties that the study corridor passes through are generally rural in nature. Land cover on the corridor is a mix of agriculture, forests, wetlands, grasslands, and urban development. Agriculture is more common on the west end, and wetlands are the predominant land use on the east end of the corridor. The largest urbanized area is the City of Ladysmith in Rusk County with a population of 3,850.

US 8 is classified as a rural principal arterial and a connector route from US 53 to US 51. The highway links the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area to the agriculture and tourism opportunities in northern Wisconsin. The traffic volumes on the study corridor range from 6,000 ADT near Ladysmith to about 2,500 ADT near Brantwood. Truck traffic comprises about 16.4 percent of the total traffic volume. Traffic projections for the year 2025 indicate that volumes will increase to 7,800 ADT near Ladysmith and 4,000 ADT near Brantwood.

The operation of a roadway is typically described as its LOS and ranges from A (good service, no congestion) to F (poor service, severe congestion). The study corridor ranges from LOS B to LOS D. There is only one location, near Ladysmith, where the corridor operates at LOS D. Most of the corridor operates at LOS C. Based on the year 2025 traffic projections the LOS on all of the study corridor segments will diminish one level with the exception of Ladysmith where it will remain at LOS D.

The average crash rate of the entire study corridor was below the statewide average with the exception of Ladysmith, which had a rate that exceeded the statewide average.

#### 3.4.1.3 Description of Proposed Concepts and Strategies

Several concepts and strategies were developed to meet the corridor needs. The concepts were:

1. Corridor Preservation

   Protect existing or planned transportation corridors from inconsistent development.

2. Addition of Passing Lanes

   Sixteen potential locations were identified where passing lanes would help alleviate passing demand and congestion.

3. Addition of Climbing Lanes

   According to the FDM, a portion of one of the study segments warranted climbing lanes because of the long and steep road grades.

4. Intersection Improvements

   Several intersections were identified where improvements would address problems such as high turning movements, poor sight distance, high peak-hour volumes, and high truck traffic.

5. Alignments

   There is one instance where a horizontal curve is substandard (County L) and should be addressed. Eighty-three percent of the vertical curves met the design criteria for minimum 60 mph (97 km/h) SSD.

6. Cross section Modification

   It is suggested that the existing US 8 cross section be improved to an A2 standard typical cross section. The biggest difference between the existing cross section and the A2 cross section is the existing 8-foot (2.4 m) shoulders. The standard is 10-foot (3 m) shoulders.

7. Roadway Maintenance

   Trees adjacent to the roadway shade the surface and prevent ice and snow from melting in the winter. It is recommended that the trees be cut back enough to allow faster ice and snow melting.

8. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

   Several ITS strategies were identified that may improve roadway operation if implemented. Strategies include deicing systems, milepost reference numbers, rural coordinate addressing, and operations optimization.

### 3.4.2 Cameron–US 8 Realignment

The Village of Cameron is located about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) northeast of the US 8/US 53 interchange. From the interchange, US 8 proceeds due east for about 1 mile (1.6 km) until it intersects County SS. At the intersection US 8 turns due north and is concurrent with County SS for 0.75 mile (1.2 km) into the Village whereupon it turns due east again. WisDOT was in the process of designing a US 8 Realignment project in this area to bypass the Village of Cameron. Construction was tentatively scheduled for 2012 but was dependent largely on financial participation from the local governments of the Village of Cameron and Barron County. The proposed realignment was to begin just west of the existing US 8 and County SS intersection. An interchange was planned for the intersection of existing US 8 and County SS. The realignment would continue northeast and connect back into the existing US 8 just west of Rice Creek. In August 2005 WisDOT announced it was delaying construction because there was not consensus in the community for the plan proposed. The federal funds secured for the project will go toward planning and mapping the corridor, designing an acceptable proposal and purchasing necessary right of way. Once a consensus is reached at the local level, the project will be rescheduled for construction.

### 3.4.3 Minnesota Trunk Highway 8 (TH 8) Study

A large amount of traffic on US 8 in Wisconsin travels to and from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. At the inception of the US EIS study, coordination with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) was begun because of a study MNDOT had underway for Minnesota's segment of US 8 (designated in Minnesota as TH 8) between the Twin Cities and Wisconsin. MNDOT's TH 8 Study proposed alternatives to provide safety, operational, and capacity improvements to the TH 8 Corridor from I-35 to the west in Chisago County, Minnesota, to the intersection of US 8/WIS 35 (N) to the east in Polk County, Wisconsin. The *Trunk Highway 8 Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document*, published in September 2002, determined that the project would require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Copies of the Scoping Document were distributed to agencies, interested persons, and libraries for review and to aid in identifying issues and analyses to be contained in the EIS. A public meeting was also held in October 2002.

Eleven realignment alternatives shown in Figure 3.4.3-1 were initially developed to address the purpose and need of the project. These alternatives were analyzed and condensed by the TH 8 Scoping Study Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) based on planned upgrades for the area and an OD survey. All the alternatives carried forward were on TH 8 or south of TH 8. The eleven alternatives are presented in Figure 15 of the *Trunk Highway 8 Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document*.

After this set of alternatives was reviewed by the TH 8 Task Force in fall 2000, additional north-south connectors to provide local circulation were added to the alternatives list. The Task Force also added a Wisconsin Connection in response to the environmental documentation of this US 8 project. The alternatives were further refined and preliminary analysis identified impacts associated with the alternatives.

Alternatives were eliminated based on environmental and land use impacts or failure to meet transportation needs. The remaining alternatives are illustrated in Figure 3.4.3-2 from the *Trunk Highway 8 Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document*. Following the public hearing and with the concurrence of the TH 8 Task Force, MnDOT decided to drop both of the two alternatives on new alignment (located to the south of the existing alignment) from further consideration and will only continue to study potential improvements on the existing corridor, Alternative 3. Based on this decision, the need for development of an EIS for the TH 8 corridor was discontinued and separate improvements as identified in the scoping study will be pursued on a case-by-case basis. MnDOT also intends to explore the option of an alternate route connection to Wisconsin, but would use existing state highway corridors on TH 95 and 97 in lieu of pursuing a corridor on a new alignment.

**Figure 3.4.3-1**

**TH 8 Alternatives**

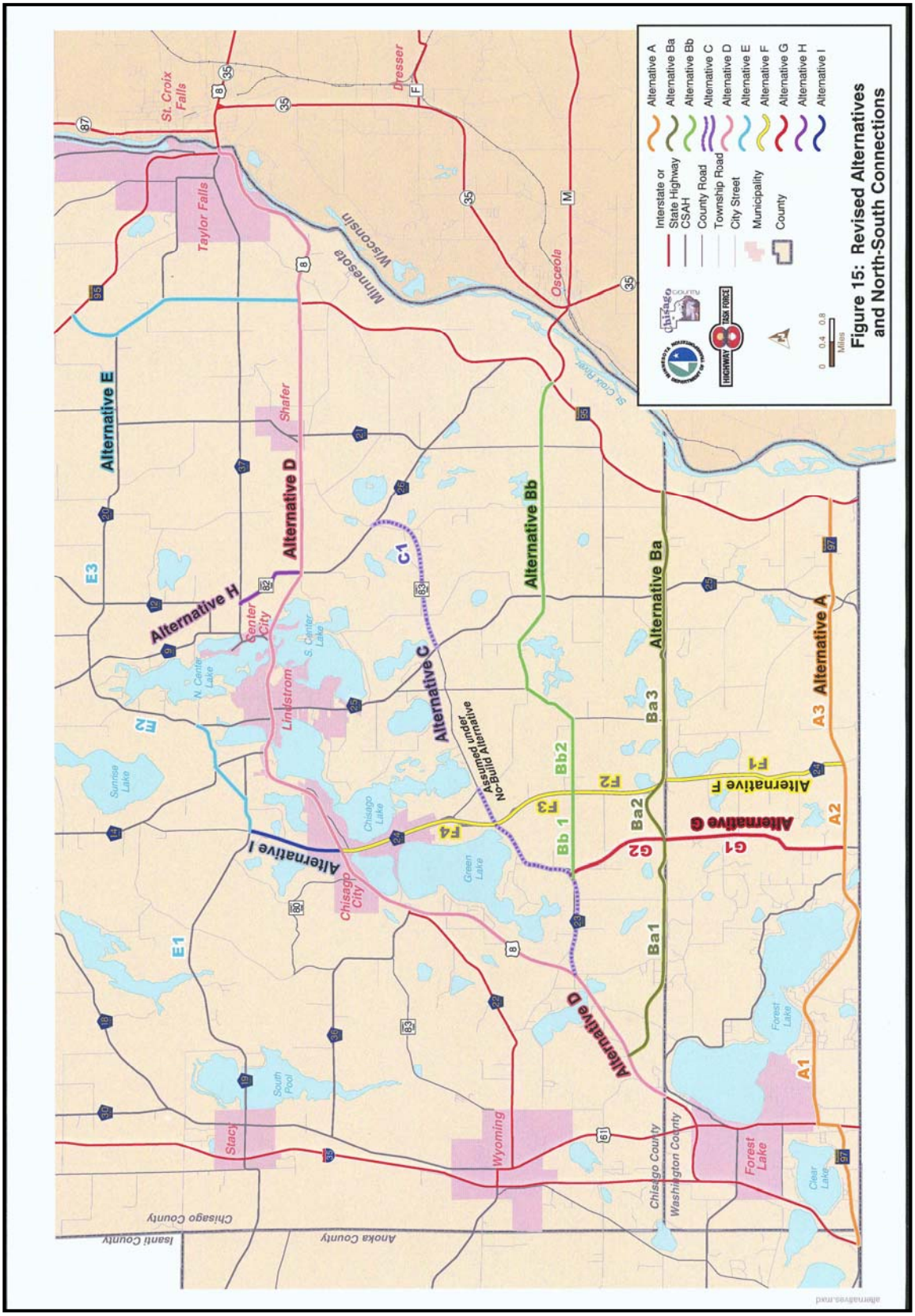

**Figure 3.4.3-2**

**TH 8 Alignments Recommended for Further Study**